



Bringing Soul to Aruba is a “Family Affair”

The Soul Beach Music Festival is an enormously successful event that brings thousands from dozens of areas of the United States to share days of incredible music and great comedy, and to find new friends. The busy schedule of parties and events aside from the three concerts create an atmosphere of camaraderie and good times, and people feel like “family” by the time they go home. One seems to hear the classic refrain “We are family” by Sister Sledge in your head, and it plays very strongly when meeting and getting to know the people behind the scenes that have made it all happen.

On Saturday, May 27, the VIP press conference brought them all together at the Renaissance Convention Center to acknowledge the hard work and determination that goes into bringing Soul to Aruba. Countless people are involved, but the driving force behind it all is the Adkins Family, those that everyone gets to know, such as Mark, Donna and Dorothy, and those that are behind the scenes. Their brother David (better known as Sinbad) brought the first Sinbad’s Soul Festival to Aruba ten years ago, and they have kept up the family tradition.

Mark’s parents, Don and Louise have accompanied them to Aruba every year for the festival, and they were at the gathering on Saturday to enjoy a proud moment, as Mark was awarded the title of Ambassador of Goodwill by the Minister of Transportation and Tourism Edison Brieson, assisted by the head of the Aruba Tourism Authority, Myrna Jansen. Along with Mark, Minister Brieson and Ms. Jansen honored George Welch, the man behind the scenes that makes sure everything happens as it should, with the title of Ambassador. Both men were awarded beautifully framed certificates, and were truly touched, as they were officially declared part of the “Aruban family.”

Saturday’s press conference was also a time to thank all the local and international sponsors that make the Soul Beach Festival a success. R. Keith Solomon, the Community Affairs Director for Microsoft in the New York region was on island to accept accolades for the company’s involvement, as was Patrick Melchior, the local representative for Heineken. Tropical Bottling, De Palm Tours, The Radisson Resort, the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort, The Mill Resort and The Renaissance Resort all received acknowledgment for their partnership in helping to make Soul Beach a success.

The highlight of the afternoon was the arrival of Brian McKnight and Anthony Hamilton, the mega talents that headlined the Saturday night concert. They graciously thanked all involved, particularly the Adkins family for bringing them to Aruba. Anthony Hamilton semi-joked that he was so taken with the island he was considering buying a house, and received a gracious invitation from reporter Annalisa Gesterkamp that he could always bunk with her and her friends.

The Soul Beach Music Festival has become an annual tradition after nearly ten years. It has brought so many people back to Aruba time and again, not only is it an actual family affair, as in the case of the Adkins, but it has made one big family of all the people that return to enjoy the time with the friends they have made over the years. This family also includes the many that work together, both from the island and from the U.S. to see that everyone has a wonderful time year after year. During Saturday’s press conference, the message truly was “we are family!”